



## City of Toronto Department of Public Health

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### NEWS RELEASE

September 13, 1990

#### DRINKING WATER QUALITY REPORT RELEASED

A report by the Department of Public Health on the quality of Toronto tap water, bottled water and treated water was presented today to the Board of Health.

The study concludes that the overall quality of tap water makes it the current best choice for drinking water. Changes to the treatment process will improve it even further. Three substances of most concern, aluminum, lead and trihalomethanes, can be reduced substantially through methods being investigated by the Metropolitan Toronto Department of Public Works.

In releasing the report, the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Perry Kendall, pointed out that the major public health concerns are with bacteria found in some water treated by poorly maintained point-of-use devices. These could pose problems for the young and old or people with immune deficiency diseases, he said.

"Many of the chemicals measured in this study are the same chemicals that have been detected in the water, sediment and fish of Lake Ontario and the Niagara River," Dr. Kendall noted. He called for the Canadian and Ontario governments to eliminate toxic discharges to the Great Lakes.

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The Department of Public Health does not promote the use of bottled water or water treatment devices because water from these sources has the potential for inconsistent bacterial and chemical quality. Lack of regulations do not guarantee the consumer a consistent quality product.

The Department of Public Health undertook this study as the first stage of a larger research effort to identify and assess routes by which toxic substances enter the body through water, air, food and soil. Sampling for the air study has been completed and analysis is underway.

Drinking water was chosen as the first area of investigation because of high public concern regarding the quality of drinking water. This concern has led to a dramatic increase in sales of bottled water and water treatment devices. Recent surveys show that more than 22 percent of Torontonians use an alternative to tap water.

Scientists have also become increasingly concerned about the multitude of trace chemicals present in the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. There is also scientific concern about the effects of consuming small quantities of toxic contaminants over a lifetime.

In releasing the report today, Dr. Kendall called on the public to help elected officials and government agencies decide what level of public funding is reasonable in order to achieve an acceptable quality of tap water.